




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; DUTIES AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (5.08 pm): I rise to speak on the appropriation bills cognate debate. Quite frankly, I am saddened by this budget. It is the same old Labor, with no regard for our kids and future generations. It is another budget of reckless spending, which is typical of what we have seen from successive Queensland Labor governments over the past 20 to 30 years.

I wish that state governments were subject to the same requirements as local councils. From my time in the Gold Coast council as chair of finance, I know that the first rule was that you were not allowed to deliver a budget that was not balanced. You were not allowed to set a budget that was in excess of your income or your ability to cover the full cost of the budget, nor were you allowed to set a budget that would generate any significant surplus. You had to account for every cent.

The second principle that councils had to subscribe to was the one of good fiscal management in terms of debt servicing. Councils have statutory requirements as to what proportion of their budget they can spend on debt servicing and debt repayments. I think it is quite sad that we do not have similar standards for state governments, particularly here in Queensland.

Recently I was chatting with an older friend of mine who made a comment that I think is quite relevant. He said that typically politicians only have their eyes on the next election, but statesmen have their eyes on the next generation. I have to say that there is very little about this Labor budget that is about the next generation. All we will see from this budget, last year's budget and the previous decade of budgets is a legacy of debt and deficit. I was so concerned about this that during the week I thought I would do a bit of research into what help there might be for our Treasurer in terms of getting good advice around what a good budget looks like. Obviously, Treasury is not giving him great advice.

I stumbled across some advice on the internet. It is from an Australian based company. The opening page of the website states—

Getting out of debt takes commitment, discipline and the right knowledge.

Sounds like hard work, doesn't it? In fact, the hardest part is deciding that you're ready for change and that you're ready to find the right people who can guide you through that process.

Quite frankly, I do not know that the people sitting around the cabinet table with the Premier and the Treasurer are necessarily getting the right advice. The company claims that just a slice of what you get when they work with you includes—

- Expert personal budgeting advice
- Total visibility of your finances at your fingertips

- Structure and support from client coaches to you help achieve your goals
- A customised plan to pay off your debt, if required
- Daily management of income expenses
- Your payments and obligations to creditors are scheduled and prioritised

They will also give you help with savings forecasts and access to client support. Under the heading 'How to get out of debt', the website states—

Personal debt is at record levels in Australia and hundreds of thousands of people are trying their best to get out of debt. Many find themselves burdened with loans and credit cards they can't afford. Others are afraid of losing their car, home or other possessions.

Of his great plan to help pay off some of the debt, I note that in his speech the Treasurer talked about recycling money. Effectively, he said that, of the \$4 billion that they are raiding from the superannuation fund, they are going to use \$2 billion to pay off debt. That is a little bit like taking out \$2,000 as a cash advance on your credit card to meet your mortgage payment for the month. The problem is that, while you might have got the bank off your back for your mortgage payment, you still have the net debt.

This local company offers a free consultation. It concludes by stating that you do not want to be a statistic; that you should seek to be a better you. I am happy to table this information in the interests of getting Queensland out of debt. That free service is offered to the government and constituents by Mybudget.com.au. I table that document in the interests of trying to get a little common sense into our approach to budgeting.

Tabled paper: Screenshots of www.mybudget.com.au [998].

Government members interjected.

Mr MOLHOEK: I am not sure what the interjections were from those opposite but, as a father of four, one of my concerns is for the future of my kids. It would be reckless of me as a parent not to be thinking about the financial security of my kids. I want to be in a position to support them with their education and help them get on their feet later in life as they move through their careers. As a government, we have a responsibility to think about our kids and their kids. Sadly, what we inherited in 2012 and what we are still living with is a legacy of debt and one of the worst balance sheets in Australia. Sadly, that does not augur well for the future of our kids.

I note that in the budget papers the government revealed that they have splurged and in the past year added another 4,103 staff, or they plan to, which is over and above the 5,088 that they put on last year. For the first time, this year the state's wages bill will surpass \$20 billion, with more to come.

A government member interjected.

Mr MOLHOEK: I take that interjection. I have no problem with employing more teachers and nurses, but in the past 20 years of Labor mismanagement we saw governments that squandered the opportunity to build more infrastructure and simply added more people so that they could boost the employment figures. What they should have been doing is employing workers such as tradesmen, road builders, nurses and doctors, not more bureaucrats for the office of the Premier.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr MOLHOEK: I take that interjection. There was some good construction, but not enough. A lot of money was wasted in the executive offices in George Street by the Beattie and Bligh governments.

I want to talk a little about the detail in the budget as it relates to the Gold Coast. We have all seen the regional brochures that were produced by the government for us to proudly take back to our constituents. We are supposed to be excited about this. We are supposed to be saying, 'Isn't this amazing?' Frankly, the Gold Coast flyer does not say anything different from what was said in the flyer of the year before. In fact, it is not that much different from the flyer of the year before that. All we see is a re-announcement and a rehash of the commitments to upgrading infrastructure on the Gold Coast that we made when in government.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr MOLHOEK: We committed to that as well, prior to the last election. I have worked tirelessly with many of my colleagues on the Gold Coast, at both a council and a state level. Frankly, I find it incredibly frustrating that members on the other side of the House keep wanting to take credit for something that previous governments put in place. Sadly, the member for Mermaid Beach is not here. When he was the mayor of the Gold Coast back in the late 1990s, he was part of a move to look at the future needs of the city. Under his leadership, light rail for the Gold Coast was identified as an opportunity as far back as about 1995. It was subsequently championed by Mayor Gary Baidon. If the truth be known, it was councillors David Power and Ted Shepherd, others from the Gold Coast council and I who worked with a former minister, Minister Mickel. The ongoing legacy of that was that the former

Liberal National Party government had to find the money to pay for it and deliver it. It was a debacle. It created disruption to businesses through Surfers Paradise and Southport, because it was so badly planned and delivered in terms of its early execution. If we want to talk about history, let us get our facts straight.

I return to the brochure: I had to laugh because under the heading 'Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games', the big announcement is \$1.4 million for specialist firefighting equipment. That is it. It goes on to talk about some of the other precincts and events. I am not sure whether that is a typo or whether the strategist did not quite get it right in the presentation. It does not exactly shine in terms of what is on offer for the Gold Coast.

I would like to take a few minutes to go through the Advancing Queensland's Economy document. Then I will talk specifically to some issues in the Capital Statement. I love Labor spin. This is what they do and have been doing for decades. If we turn to page 15 of the budget highlights document in bold letters we find 'Tourism and Events Queensland guarantee \$49.9 million'. We could be mistaken for thinking that that is a big increase. When we were in government it was typically around \$25 million to \$30 million a year. Then we read the fine print and see that it says that that is over two years. Why do they not just state the figure that is committed for the year rather than try to make it seem bigger than it is? What are they trying to hide?

Quite disturbingly, if we turn to page 27—and this is where we should not be playing politics, but sadly we are—the government talks about \$200 million being allocated to address domestic and family violence. When we read the fine print, we see all of those commitments are over four years. It is not \$200 million next year; it is \$50 million.

What I find incredibly sad to hear when I talk to many of the service providers and organisations that are dealing with the challenges of domestic and family violence is that the most desperate need is for housing and crisis accommodation. Looking at the budget we find that there is \$42 million over four years for specialist domestic and family violence courts. There is \$43 million for domestic and family violence services. When we come to the most important part, we have \$8.7 million for the entire state of Queensland over four years for new crisis shelters. That is hardly a commitment. That is two new shelters to support women. That is two new shelters over four years to deal with this huge challenge across the state.

Ms Fentiman: That's the capital.

Mr MOLHOEK: I know it is capital. I understand that. What do we see in the column next to that? There is \$9.6 million over four years for what is nothing more than an advertising campaign to say what we are going to do about domestic violence. The commitment is to spend more on marketing, communications and engagement—over and above the integrated services response—than we are going to spend on building accommodation for people in crisis. That is a really sad and lame commitment for dealing with the issue. What people need is shelter.

I now turn to page 70 of the Capital Statement. The member for Springwood, the member for Woodridge, the member for Algester—

Ms Fentiman: How many new shelters when the LNP were in government?

Mr MOLHOEK: We were spending a lot more on public housing than you are.

Ms Fentiman: How many shelters when the LNP were in government?

Mr MOLHOEK: I have visited some of the shelters we built and funded.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Mr MOLHOEK: I visited the new shelter near Mount Coot-tha. What do we see in terms of a commitment to public housing from the current government? For starters, there is about \$100 million less this year and last year than we saw in the previous two years when the LNP were in government.

What are the commitments for Logan? There is nothing there for the construction of new housing—zero. This is from a government that has stalled the Logan community housing renewal program, which would have seen up to 2,000 new dwellings built at little or no cost to government. What do we see in the budget? We see nothing.

Who are the members representing that area? We have the member for Springwood, the member for Woodridge, the member for Algester, the member for Waterford and the member for Logan. There are six Labor members in the area and there is not one cent in the capital works budget for more housing. This is from a government that says that they are committed to helping families who are in need of support. That is a shame. That is a breach of everything that I thought Labor said they were about and their core values, but I digress.

I want to touch briefly on the Gold Coast health service. We have a magnificent new hospital in the heart of my electorate. I am pleased to see that there will be an increase in spending of about 7½ per cent. I suspect that part of that is a reflection of inflation, as we all know well, although it has been lower in recent years. Part of it is a reflection of the growing demand and the growing population on the Gold Coast.

What saddens me is when we turn to page 101 of the Performance Statement and look at the service standards for category 2, category 3, category 4 and category 5 visits to hospital. In one year what we have seen is a significant decline in every one of those categories. These categories deal with the percentage of patients who attended emergency departments and were seen within the recommended time frames.

In category 2 we have seen it drop from 80 per cent to 58 per cent in one year. In category 3 we have seen it drop from 75 per cent to 41 per cent. In category 4 we have seen it drop from 70 per cent to 59 per cent. The only category that has held up is category 1, which is the category where you obviously see people within a couple of minutes.

What did we hear from the health minister this week? We heard that there is going to be a winding back of the standards that we sought to bring in requiring that hospitals do everything they can to deal with patients within four hours of their arrival. We have already seen a decline in that standard. We have heard a wonderful announcement from the health minister that there is going to be a further relaxation of that standard.

I have been to the Gold Coast University Hospital. I had the pleasure of spending an afternoon and the early evening with the director of the ED and the director of nursing. They were more than happy to show me around and talk to me about some of the challenges they face. They were not complaining about the four-hour turnaround. They were not complaining about that performance standard. They were very supportive of it. They said it encouraged the hospital staff to function more efficiently.

I acknowledged, as I am sure everyone in this House would acknowledge, that there are occasions when those standards cannot be met and there are good reasons for that. I do not believe that anyone serving in our hospitals, as has been alleged by the health minister this week, would ever use a four-hour time frame as an excuse to offer a patient poor service and not look out for their best interests.

I find it incredibly sad that the message to our hardworking staff at the Gold Coast University Hospital is, 'It is okay. Do not rush too much. Take your time.'

Mr Kelly: To do your job properly. Look after the patients properly.

Mr MOLHOEK: Absolutely, we want them to do their jobs properly. The message that the health minister has sent this week is only going to see a further deterioration of those service standards. That is sad for Queenslanders and it is particularly sad for the quality of our health services.

I want to touch on the Commonwealth Games for a moment. There are some great new facilities being built as result of that. I have to say that I am very fortunate to have so much happening in my electorate with the new games village. I commend the former deputy premier on the incredible job that he and the team did in hammering out what was a very solid financial deal with Grocon. It will potentially save us a significant amount of money and get the best possible outcome for Queenslanders.

I am grateful to the council and the former departmental staff for the work they did in delivering the aquatic centre. I find it quite amusing that in the Gold Coast budget brochure the Labor government have reannounced the aquatic centre. It has been opened and operating for about two years. I am not sure why they are taking credit for that. That is an interesting aside. I am pleased that Coomera will benefit from a new sporting facility. When we were in government we made the decision not to build \$12 million of temporary facilities on the Broadwater that would be subsequently torn down but invest that money in better outcomes for families in the north.

I have concerns about the budget. I finish where I started. I am very sad about the legacy that the budget leaves for our kids. I wish the government had its eyes more firmly on the future hopes of our kids.